

# OLD ENGLISH POETS AND POETRY.

NO. 3.

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THE Crusades, which were first led on by Godfrey, at the close of the eleventh century, and which, for nearly two hundred years agitated both the eastern and western world, had a remoulding effect on all the customs and institutions of western Europe. The narrow boundaries which had hitherto restricted national and individual enterprise were broken up, and a new sphere of mental and physical exertion was opened to the excited spirits of those exciting times. The several states of Europe, each composed of almost sovereign feudatories became banded in national amity and unity; and all differences of manners—language—origin and customs were harmonized into one European character, which the blending of these, for the first time produced. It has been well said, that “before the Crusades, Europe had never been moved by the same sentiment, or acted in a common cause; till then, in fact, Europe did not exist. The Crusades made manifest the existence of Christian Europe.”

The moral incitements to these holy wars were also salutary in bringing men more under the humanizing influences of religion, and the obligations of christian duty.

The enlarged sphere of action emancipated the long dormant mind and gave it scope and energy.

The mingling of nations, rounded off by attrition the rugged angles of each, and their social and domestic systems, became greatly improved by mutual comparisons and mutual adoption.

The East, where learning had so long laid injured, was made by the rude assault of the western warriors, to give up its treasured wisdom, and knowledge became diffused among the nations.

The wars, blending religion and conquest, gave rise to the noble system of chivalry which exercised such a softening and refining influence—following as it did, like a bright morning the long night of medieval barbarism and ignorance. There was a degree of nobleness—brilliance—elegance—prowess, and devotion in the knights of the middle ages as partly excite our wonder and challenge admiration. They were the heroes of antiquity, revived and inspired by some of the higher virtues of Christianity. Mingling tenderness with courage and humanity with power.

Such a condition of things, was favorable to

poetry, and contributed greatly to inspire and perfect the art. Richard I. distinguished as a Crusader, was captivated by the sweetness of the Provencal language and the chansons of the gay science, and invited over to England many poets and troubadours, whose songs and ideas became in some measure engrafted on the stock of English poetry. Richard himself was something of a poet, and Walpole in his *Royal Authors* following Crescimbeni, says that Richard “set himself to compose a sonnet in it, which he sent to the Princess Stephanetta, wife of Hugh de Baux, and daughter of Gilbert the second Count of Provence,” and he further states on the same Italian authority, that “residing in the Court of Raimond Berlinghieri, Count of Provence, he fell in love with the Princess Leonora one of that Prince’s four daughters, whom Richard afterwards married: that he employed himself in rhyming in that language, and when he was prisoner composed some sonnets which he sent to Beatrix, Countess of Provence—sister of Leonora, and in which he complains of his Barons for letting him lie in captivity.” Walpole gives one of these poems of seven stanzas in the Provencal language, and Sismondi quotes the same in the Norman version.

We give the translation as found in Sismondi, taken from Burney’s *History of music*—vol. ii. p. 238.

SONG BY RICHARD I.

*Written during his imprisonment in the Tour Tenebreuse or black Tower.*

“No wretched captive of his prison speaks,  
Unless with pain and bitterness of soul,  
Yet consolation from the Muse he seeks,  
Whose voice alone misfortune can controul.  
Where now is each ally, each baron, friend,  
Whose face I ne’er beheld without a smile?  
Will none, his sovereign to redeem, expend  
The smallest portion of his treasures vile?

Though none may blast that, near two tedious years,  
Without relief, my bondage has endured,  
Yet know, my English, Norman, Gascon peers,  
Not one of you should thus remain immur’d:  
The meanest subject of my wide domains,  
Had I been free, a ransom should have found;

I mean not to reproach you with my chains,  
Yet still I wear them on a foreign ground!

Too true 'tis—so selfish human race!  
'Nor dead nor captive, friend or kindred find;  
Since here I pine in bondage and disgrace,  
For lack of Gold my fetters to unbind;  
Much for myself I feel, yet ah! still more  
That no compassion from my subjects flows:  
What can from infamy their names restore,  
If, while a prisoner, death my eyes should close?

But small is my surprise, though great my grief,  
To find, in spite of all his solemn vows,  
My lands are ravaged by the Gallic chief,  
While none my cause has courage to espouse.  
Though lofty towers obscure the cheerful day,  
Yet, through the dungeons melancholy gloom,  
Kind hope, in gentle whispers, seems to say,  
'Perpetual thralldom is not yet thy doom.'

Ye dear companions of my happy days,  
Of Chail and Pensaïn, aloud declare  
Throughout the earth, in everlasting lays,  
My foes against me wage inglorious war.  
Oh, tell them, too, that ne'er, among my crimes,  
Did breach of faith, deceit or fraud appear;  
That infamy will brand to latest times  
The insults I receive, while captive here.

Know, all ye men of Anjou and Touraine,  
And every bach'lor knight, robust and brave,  
That duty, now, and love, alike are vain,  
From bonds your sovereign and your friend to save;  
Remote from consolation, here I lie,  
The wretched captive of a powerful foe,  
Who all your zeal and ardor can defy,  
Nor leaves you aught but pity to bestow."

The assertion here made of his composing sonnets while prisoner, may perhaps derive some confirmation by a story of the old French chroniclers related in a note of Wharton as follows "Richard in his return from the Crusade was taken prisoner about the year 1193. A whole year elapsed before the English knew where their monarch was imprisoned. Blondel de Nesle, Richard's favorite minstrel, resolved to find out his lord; and after travelling many days without success, at last came to a castle where Richard was detained in custody. Here he found that the castle belonged to the Duke of Austria, and that a king was there imprisoned. Suspecting that the prisoner was his master, he found means to place himself directly before a window of the chamber where the king was kept, and in this situation began to sing a French chanson, which Richard and Blondel had formerly written together, when the king heard the song he knew it was Blondel who sung it; and when Blondel paused after the first half of the song, the king began the other half and completed it. On this Blondel returned home to England, and acquainted Richards Barons with the place of

his imprisonment, from which he was soon afterwards released."

Robert of Gloucester, who has been styled by his editor Hearne "the British Ennius" was doubtless to England what Quintus Ennius was to Rome—the father of English Song. The materials of his life which have been sedulously gathered are few, and imperfect, and do but little more than inform us, that he was a monk of the abbey of Gloucester, was born about 1230 and wrote about 1280, a metrical history of England from the time of Brutus to the reign of Edward 1st. His work somewhat based on the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth, has still the credit of considerable originality, though totally deficient in most of the qualities which can entitle him to the appellation of a Poet. The chief interest in this writer is his precedence in point of time over others, and his standing at the distant head of a long catalogue of illustrious poets, which like a galaxy, spans the British firmament from the days of Edward, to the present time. There is considerable obscurity in his writings, owing to the introduction of so many Saxonisms—provincialisms—and Norman French words. Below is a specimen of his style and language, being a poetical embodiment of a popular tradition concerning Stonehenge.

This most remarkable of the ancient monuments existing in England, is situated near the town of Amesbury on the extensive level of Salisbury plain; and consist of immense blocks of stone—ranged somewhat regularly and presenting the appearance of the most ancient and gigantic remains. The Saxon meaning of the word Stonehenge is "the hanging stones." It was perhaps some Druidical Temple, though every conjecture must be unsatisfactory, for their true nature can never be ascertained. The fable however, upon which Robert of Gloucester bases his story is, that the stones of which these ruins are composed were brought by giants from the distant regions of Africa and set up in Ireland; that they were washed with medicinal herbs and contained peculiar remedial virtues, which were communicated to those who touched them.

That when Hengist in the middle of the 5th century treacherously slew the Briton chieftains at a feast, King Arthur requested Merlin the magician to transport these stones from their resting place, in the Carrogh of Kildare, and erect them as a sepulchral monument over these heroes on the plain of Amesbury.

"Syre kyng," quoth Merlin tho, "suche thynges y wis  
Ne bethe for to schewe nogt, but wen gret nede ys,  
For gef iche seid in bismare, other bute it ned were,  
Sone from me he wold wende the gost, that doth me lere,"  
The kyng, tho non other was, bod hym som quoyntise—  
Bitinke about thilk cors that so noble were and wyse.  
"Sire kyng," quoth Merlin tho, "gef thou wolt here caste

In the honour of men, a worke that ever schal ylaste,  
 To the hul of Kylar send in to Yrlond,  
 Aftur the noble stones that ther habbet lenge ystonde;  
 That was the treche of giandes, for a quoynte work  
 ther ys  
 Of stones al wyth art ymad, in the world such non ys.  
 Ne ther nys nothing that me scholde myd strengthe  
 adoune cast.

Stode heo here, as heo doth there ever a wolde last."  
 The kyng somdele to lyghe, tho he herde this tale,  
 "How mygte," he seyde, "suche stones so grete and so  
 fale,

Beybrogt of so fer lond? And get mist of were,  
 Me wold wene, that in thislonde no ston to wonke nere."  
 "Syre kyng," quoth Merlyn, "ne make nought an ydel  
 such lyghing.

For yt nys an ydel nought that ich tell this tythyng.  
 For in the farreste stude of leffric giands while sette  
 Thiike stones for medycyne and in Yrlond hem sette,  
 While heo wonenden in Yrlond to make here bathes  
 there,

Ther undir forte bathi wen thei syk were,  
 For heo wuld the stones wasch and ther enne bathe  
 ywis.

For ys no ston ther among that of gret vertu nys.  
 The kyng and ys conseil radde the stones forte sette  
 And with gret power of batail gef any more hem lette  
 Uter the kynges brother, that Ambrose hett also,  
 In another name ychose was therto,  
 And fifeene thousand men this dede forte do  
 And Merlyn for his quointise thider went also.

The next name which is worthy of note, is that  
 of Robert de Brunne, often called Robert Man-  
 nyng. He was born about 1270 and ultimately  
 became a canon in the monastery of Brunne near  
 Depyng in Lincolnshire. His first work a met-  
 rical paraphrase of the French work of Grosshead,  
 entitled "Manuel de Peche," was begun in 1303,  
 and his second and more valuable one, is a Chron-  
 icle of England in verse translated from two  
 French Poets with slight additions and versions  
 of his own. His prologue will show his metre—  
 his language and his purpose. It is as follows:

"Lordynges that be now here,  
 If ye will listene and lere,  
 All the story of Englande,  
 Als Robert Mannyng wryten it fand,  
 And on Inglysch has it schewed,  
 Not for the lered but for the lewed;  
 For tho that on this lond woun  
 That the Latin ne Frankys coun,  
 For to half solace and gamen  
 In felanschip when that sitt samen  
 And it is wisdom forto wyten  
 The state of the land, and hef it wryten,  
 What manere of folk first it wan,  
 And of what kynde it first began.  
 And gude it is for many thynges,  
 For to here the dedis of kynges,  
 Whilk were foles, and whilk were wyse,  
 And whilk of tham couth most quantyse;  
 And whylk did wrong, and whilk ryght,

And whylk mayntened pes and fyght.  
 Of thare dedes sall be mi sawe,  
 In what tyme, and of what lan,  
 I sholl you from gre to gre,  
 Sen the tyme of Sir Noe:  
 From Noe unto Eneas,  
 And what betwixt tham was,  
 And fro Eneas till Brutus tyme,  
 That kynde he tells in this ryme.  
 For Brutus to cadweladres,  
 The last Bryton that this lande lees  
 Alle that kynd and alle the frute  
 That come of Brutus that is the Brute;  
 And the ryght Brute is told no more  
 Than the Brytons tyme wore.  
 After the Bretons the Inglis comen  
 The lordschip of this land thai namen;  
 South, and north, west, and east,  
 That call men now the Inglis gest.  
 When thai first among the Bretons,  
 That now ere Inglis than were Saxons,  
 Saxons Inglis hight all oliche.  
 Thai aryved up at Saudwyche,  
 In the kynges synce Vortogerne  
 That the lande wolde tham not werne, &c.  
 One master WACE the Frankes telles  
 The Brute all that the Latin spellles.  
 Fro Eneas and Cadwaladre &c.  
 And ryght as mayster wael says,  
 I tell myne Inglis the same ways."

Brunne translated also some latin pieces into  
 rhymes, but he was a mere versifier not an origin-  
 al Poet, who had industry without wit, and perse-  
 verence without genius.

"Yet it should be remembered that even such a  
 writer as Robert de Brunne, uncouth and unpleas-  
 ing as he naturally seems, and chiefly employed  
 in turning the theology of his age into rhyme,  
 contributed to form a style, to teach expression,  
 and to polish his native tongue. In the infancy  
 of language and composition, nothing is wanted  
 but writers; at that period even the most artless  
 have their use."

Adam Davie is the only English Poet of the  
 time of Edward II. whose name and pieces have  
 come down to us, and all that is known of him is  
 that he was marshal of Stratford-le-bow near Lon-  
 don. The poems of this author which remain to  
 us consist of 'visions'; 'the Battle of Jerusalem';  
 'the Legend of St. Alexius'; 'Scripture histories';  
 'of fifteen tokens before the day of judgment';  
 'Lamentations of Souls' and a 'life of Alexander.'  
 The 'visions' mostly relate to Edward the second  
 and Edward the confessor, and are full of compli-  
 ments from the former to the latter. The "battle  
 of Jerusalem" is a poetical account of the siege of  
 that city by Vespasian, and in the story is one of  
 those bold licences of the times where Pilate is  
 made to challenge our Lord to single combat.

The "Legend of St. Alexius" is a version of a

latin song. The "Scripture histories" begin with the story of Joseph and end with Daniel.

His "Ffteen tokens before the day of Judgment" are those mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, and the "Lamentations of Souls" is rather their rejoicing at the advent of Christ. His poetical merit mainly rests on his "Life of Alexander," which appears to be a mixture of translation, compilation and original composition, and in which the fine incidents of classic story, are dressed up with all the adornments of Chivalry to suite the tastes of the court of Edward. The following description of a splendid procession made by queen Olympias will illustrate both the style and sentiment of the poem.

"In this time, fair and *Joly-f*,  
Olympias, that faire wife,  
Woulde make a riche *fest*  
Of knightes, and ladies *honest*,  
Of burges, and of jugelers,  
And of men of each *mesters*.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Mickle she desireth to shew her body,  
Her fair hair, her face *rody*,  
To have *lees*, and all praising:  
And all is folly! by heaven king!  
\* \* \* \* \*

In faire attire in diverse quaintise  
Many there rode in riche wise.  
So did the dame Olympias  
For to show her *gentil* face:  
A mule also, white so milk,  
With saddle of gold, *sambu* of silk  
Was y-brought to the queen,  
And many bells of silver sheen,  
Y-fasten'd on *orfreys* of mound  
That hangen nigh down to ground,  
Forth she fared mid her rout;  
A thousand ladies of rich soute,  
A sparrow-hawk that was *honest*  
So sat on the lady's fist,  
Four trumps tofore her blew;  
Many men that day her knew:  
An hundred thousand, and eke mo,  
All *alonten* her unto.  
All the town be-hanged was,  
Against the lady Olynpias,  
*Orgues*, *chymbes*, each manner *glee*,  
Was *drynan*, *ayein* that lady free,  
Withopten the townes myrey  
Was *mered* each manner play.  
There was knights tournaying,  
There was maidens caroling.  
There was champions *skirming*,  
——— also wrestling.  
Of lion's chace, of bear-baiting,  
A bay of boar, of bull slaying.  
All the city was be-hong  
With rich *sayntes* and *pelles* long.  
Dame Olympias among this press  
Single rode, all mantle-less.  
\* \* \* \* \*

Her yellow hair was fair-attired,  
Mid riche stringes of golde wired;  
It *helyd* her abouten all  
To her gentile middle small!  
Bright and shene was her face;  
Every fair-head in her was."

In hastily sketching these notices of the Poets, we had almost forgotten to mention an important movement connected with English Poetry—we mean the origin of that singular appointment of Poet Laureate. Henry III. who reigned from 1216 to 1272, kept at his court a French Poet named Henry de Avranches—called in the Chronicles of the time, "Master Henry the Versifier." It is supposed that his stipend was a hundred shillings per annum as two orders for that sum for the years 1249 and 1251 directed to the kings treasures are still preserved. From this precedent originated a custom of employing a Poet for the special purpose of the court, whose duty it was to celebrate in verse the particular incidents and events in the reigns of their respective sovereigns.

Robert Longlande, a native of Shropshire; a secular Priest and fellow of Oriel College, Oxford appears to have written about the year 1362, a series of poetical visions under the general title of vision of Pierce Plowman.

It consists of twenty visions, supposed to have occurred to the author on the Malverne-hills in Worcestershire, in each of which are ridiculed and satirized the vices and follies of the age—particularly of the clergy to which class he belonged; and the superstitions which then abounded. It has not much poetical merit, but abounds in good sense—wise reflections, and moral truths. The dietetic rules in the following lines have not lost their truths by the lapse of ages. They are the remarks of Hunger an ideal character to Pierce Plowman, who had prayed of him to "teach him a *leech-craft* (i. e. remedials) for him and his servant."

"I wot well, quoth Hunger, what sickness you aileth:  
Ye have *manged* over much; and that maketh you groan.

And I *hote* thee, quoth Hunger, as thou thy *heal* willest,  
That thou drink no day ere thou dine somewhat:  
Eat not, I hote thee, ere Hunger thee take  
And send thee of his sauce to saviour with thy lips:  
And keep same 'till supper-time, and sit not too long,  
And rise up ere appetite have eaten his fill.

Let not Sir Surfeit sit on thy board:  
*Leve* him not, for he is lecherous and licorous of tongue,  
And after many manner of meat his maw is ahunger'd.  
And if thou diet thee thus, I dare lay my ears  
That Physic shall his fuzzed hood for his food sell,  
And his cloak of *Calabrye*, with all his *Knaps* of gold,  
And be fain, by my faith, his physio to let  
And learn to labor with hand; for *live-lode* is meet.  
For murderers are many leeches; Lord *hem* amend!  
They do men die by their drinks, ere destiny it would.  
By St. Paul (quod Pierce) these are profitable words!

Wead the, Hunger, where thow wilt, yet be thou ever !  
For this is a lovely lesson, Lord it thee for-yield !

Longlande differs from most other poets by substituting alliteration for rhyme. The following passage is quoted, both as illustrative of this remark and as perhaps one of the most daring conceptions of the poem. It represents Kinde (Nature) sending forth diseases from the planets at the command of conscience and his attendants Age and Death.

"Kind conscience *tho* heard, and came out of the planets,  
And sent forth his forriours, fevers, and fluxes,  
Coughs, and *cardiacles*, cramps and tooth-aches,

\* \* \* \* \*

Boils, and botches, and burning agues,  
Phrensis, and foul evil, foragers of kind !

\* \* \* \* \*

There was "harrow ! and help ! here cometh kind  
With Death that is dreadful to undone us all !"

\* \* \* \* \*

Age the hoar, he was in the va-ward,  
And bare the banner before death ; by right he it  
claimed.

Kind came after, with many keen sores,  
As pox and pestilences, and much people shent.  
So kind, through corruptions, killed full many.  
Death came driving after, and to dust pashed  
Kings and kayzers, knights and popes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many a lonely lady and lemans of knights  
Swoonden and swelten for sorrow of Death's Dints,  
&c."

The coincidence between this passage and Milton's description of the Lazar house in *Paradise Lost*, book xi. has often been remarked.

Pierce the Plowman's *Crede*, is commonly regarded as an appendage to the Plowman's tale though written by another hand, in imitation of the former. Pope, the poet, in a copy of the "*Crede*" which once belonged to him but which passed through the hands of the Bishop of Gloucester to the late Mr. Wharton, has given the following abstract of this poem. "An ignorant plain man having learned his Pater-noster and Ave-mary, wants to learn his creed. He asks several religious men of the several orders to teach it him. First of a friar Minor, who bids him beware of the Carmelites, and assures him they can teach him nothing, describing their faults, &c. But that the friars Minors shall save him, whether he learns his creed or not. He goes next to the friars Preachers, whose magnificent monastery he describes : there he meets a fat friar, who declaims against the Augustines. He is shocked at his pride, and goes to the Augustines. They rail at the Minorites. He goes to the Carnes ; they abuse the Dominicans, but promise him salvation, without creed, for money. He leaves them with indignation, and finds an honest poor Plowman in the field, and

tells him how he was disappointed by the four orders. The plowman answers with a long invective against them."

It begins thus :

"Cros, and Curteis Christ, this beginning spede  
For the Faders Friendshipe that *Fourmed* heaven,  
And through the *Speacial* Spirit, that *Sprong* of hem  
tweyne

And al in one Godhed endles dwelleth."

Throughout it exposes in strong and forcible language, the many abuses and perversions of the religious institutions of the day, and taking part with Wickliff, speaks in no measured terms of the profligacy and licentiousness and avarice of the ecclesiastical orders in England.

We can say of both the "*Crede*" and visions of Pierce Plowman as has been said of Langland the author of the latter, that "whatever may be thought of its poetical merit, cannot fail of being considered as an entertaining and useful commentary on the general histories of the fourteenth century, not only from its almost innumerable pictures of contemporary manners, but also from its connection with the particular feelings and opinions of the time. The reader will recollect that the minds of men were greatly incensed by the glaring contradictions that appeared between the professions and actions of the two great orders of the state."

Langland's poem, addressed to popular readers, written in simple but energetic language, and admirably adapted by its dramatic form, and by the employment of allegorical personages, to suit the popular taste, though it is free from these extravagant doctrines, breathes only the pure spirit of the Christian religion, and inculcates the principles of rational liberty. This may possibly have prepared the minds of men for those bolder tenets which, for a series of years, were productive only of national restlessness and misery, but which ultimately terminated in a free government and a reformed religion.

In the works of the Poets we have thus far noticed, we have found but little originality, most of them being servile imitators or free versifiers of French and Latin originals.

We come now to one whom Hallam has styled as "perhaps the first original Poet in our language that has survived." This is Lawrence Minot—a writer in the middle of the fourteenth century, but of whose works nothing was known till their accidental discovery a few years since by Mr. Tyrwhitt among the Cottonian MSS. of the British Museum.

Mr. Ritson has published a pleasant edition of this Old English Poet, and has endeavored to illustrate his poems by quotations from the Ancient Chronicles thus confirming the incidents of one by the narratives of the other. Of the life of

Minot, we know hardly anything; conjecture alone must furnish our facts, for history is silent.

"It seems pretty clear," says Ritson, "from our author's dialect and orthography, that he was a native of one of the northern counties, in some monastery whereof the manuscript which contains his poems, along with many others in the same dialect, is conjectured to have been written; and to which, at the same time, it is not improbable that he himself should have belonged. Chance, however, may one day bring us somewhat better acquainted with his history."

"The creative imagination and poetical fancy which distinguished Chaucer, who, considering the general barbarism of his age and country, may be regarded as a prodigy, admit, it must be acknowledged, of no competition. Yet, if the truth may be uttered, without offence to the established reputation of that pre-eminent genius, one may venture to assert that, in point of ease, harmony, and variety of versification, as well as general perspicuity of style, LAURENCE MINOR is, perhaps, equal, if not superior, to any English Poet before the sixteenth, or even, with very few exceptions, before the seventeenth century. There are, in fact, but two other Poets who are any way remarkable for a particular faculty of rhyming and happy choice of words; Robert of Brunne, already mentioned, who wrote before 1340, and Thomas Tusser, who wrote about 1560."

Mr. Ritson may be pardoned for this extravagance of praise in consideration of his editorial enthusiasm.

We subjoin two specimens of his poetry which show some advancement of the language, but still much antiquated spelling and many French phrases. The first piece is part of a poem entitled,

"How Edward the King come in Braband  
And toke homage of all the land."

And refers to the wars of Edward III. with Philip of Valois for the crown of France, beginning in 1336 and continued with varying successes and short truces till the death of the English monarch in 1377. The Province of Brabant acknowledged fealty to Edward as King of France, and the Duke of Brabant, and the Marquis of Juliers were sent as Ambassadors by Edward to demand of Philip a resignation of his crown. This was refused, and after various delays the famous battle of Cressy was fought and Calais surrendered to the English. These are the principal incidents to be acquainted with to a right understanding of this portion of the Poem.

"Edward, oure cumly king,  
In Braband has his woning,  
With main cumly knight;  
And in that land, trewly to tell,  
Ordains he still for to dwell,  
To time he think to fight.

Now God, that es of mightes maste,  
Grant him grace of the haly gaste,  
His heritage to win;  
And Mari moder, of mercy fre,  
Save oure king and his menze  
Fro sorrow, schame and syn.

Thus in Braband has he bene,  
Whare he bifore was seldom sene,  
For to prove thaire japes;  
Now no langer wil he spare,  
Bot unto Fraunce fast will he fare,  
To comfort hym with grapes.

Furth he ferd into France,  
God save him fro mischance  
And all his company!  
The nobill duc of Braband  
With him went into that land,  
Redy to lif or dy.

Than the riche flowre de lice  
Wan thare ful litill prise,  
Fast he fled for ferde;  
The right aire of that cuntre  
Es cumen, with all his knightes fre,  
To schac him by the berd.

Sir Philip the Valayse,  
Wit his men in tho dayes,  
To batale had he thought;  
He bad his men than purvay,  
Withowten lenger delay,  
Bot he ne held it nought.

He broght folk, ful grete wone,  
Ay sevyng agains one,  
That ful wele wapind were;  
Bot sone when he herd ascry,  
That king Edward was nere tharby,  
Than durst he nought cum nere.

In that morning fella myst,  
And when oure Ingliss-men it wist,  
It changed all thaire chere;  
Oure king unto god made his bone,  
And god sent him gude confort sone,  
The weder wex ful clere.

Oure king and his men held the felde  
Stalworthly, with spere and schelde,  
And thought to win his right  
With lordes, and with knightes kene,  
And other doghty men bydene,  
That war ful frek to fight.

When Sir Philip of France herd tell  
That king Edward in feld walld dwell,  
Than gayned him no gle;  
He traisted of no better bote,  
Bot both on hors and on fote  
He hasted him to fle.

It semid he was ferd for strokes  
When he did fell his grete okes  
About his pavilyonne;  
Abated was than all his pride,

For langer thare durst he noght bide,  
His bost was broght all donne.

The king of Benne had cares colde,  
That was ful hardy and bolde,  
A stede to umstride;  
(He and) the king als of Naverne  
War faire ferd in the ferne  
Thaire heviddes for to hide.

And leves wele it es no lye,  
And felde hat Flemangrye  
That king Edward was in,  
With princes that war strifande bolde,  
And dukes that war doghty tolde,  
In batayle to bigin.

The princes that war riche on ran  
Gert nakers strike, and trumpe blan,  
And made mirth at thaire might;  
Both al blast and many a bon  
War redy railed opon a ron,  
And ful frek for to fight.

Gladly thai gaf mete and drink,  
So that thai suld the better swink,  
The wight men that thai wares.  
Sir Philip of Franncce fled for dont,  
And hied him hame with all his ront:  
Coward god gif him care:

For thare than had the lely-flowre  
Lom all halely his honowre,  
That so gat fled for ferd;  
Bot oure king Edward come ful still,  
When that he trowed no harm him till,  
And keped him in the berde."

The other quotation of Minot refers to an interesting portion of Scottish History, which however would be too long a narrative to detail here. Suffice it to say that David, the King of Scotland, at the instigation of the King of France—took occasion of Edward's absence from his realm to march an army to the Bishopric of Durham, which sat down before that city in October 1346. The English soon gathered an army and the Regency placing the Archbishop of York—William de Percy and Ralph de Nevill at its head, engaged the Scots and totally routed them at a place since known as the battle of Nevill's Cross, where David was taken prisoner and retained in easy captivity for eleven years.

This event is here clothed in the language of poetry.

"Sir David had of his men great Loss  
With Sir Edward, at the Nevill-Cross.

Sir David the Bruse,  
Was at a distance,  
When Edward the Baliolfe  
Rade with his lance;  
The north end of Ingland  
Tched him to daunce,  
When he was met on the more  
With mekill mischance.

Sir Philip the Valayse  
May him noght avance,  
The flowres that faire war  
Er fallen in Franncce;  
The flowres er now fallen  
That fers war and fell,  
A bare with his bataille  
Has done than to dwell.

Sir David the Bruse  
Said he sulde fonde  
To ride through all Ingland,  
Wald he noght wonde;  
At the Westinminster-hall  
Suld his stedes stonde,  
Whils oure king Edward  
War out of the londe;  
But now has sir David  
Missed of his merkes,  
And Philip the Valays,  
With all thaire grete clerkes.

Sir Philip the Valais,  
Suth for to say,  
Sent unto Sir David,  
And faire gan him pray,  
At ride thurgh Ingland,  
Thaire fomen to slay,  
And said none es et home  
To let hym the way;  
None letes him the way,  
To wende where he will:  
Bot with schiperd-staves  
Fand he his fill.

Fro Philip the Valais  
Was sir David sent,  
All Ingland to win,  
Fro Twede unto Trent;  
He broght mani bere-bag,  
With bow redy bent;  
Thai robbed and thai reved,  
And held that thai hent;  
It was in the waniand  
That thai furth went;  
Fro covaitise of cataile  
Tho schrewes war schent;  
Schent war tho schrewes,  
And ailed unsele,  
For at the Nevil-cros  
Nedes bud tham knele.

At the ersbisschop of Zork  
Now will i begyn,  
For he may, with his right hand,  
Assoyl us of syn;  
Both Dorem and Carlele,  
Thai wald nevir blin  
The wirschip of Ingland  
With wappen to win;  
Mekil wirschip thai wan,  
And wele have thai waken,  
For syr David the Bruse  
Was in that tyme taken.  
When sir David the Bruse  
Satt on his stede,

He said of all Ingland  
Haved he no drede ;  
Bot hinde John of Coupland,  
A wight man in wede,  
Talked to David,  
And kend him his crede ;  
Thare was sir David  
So dughly in his dede,  
The faire toure of Londen  
Haved he to mede.

Sone than was sir David  
Brought unto the toure,  
And William the Douglass,  
With men of honowre ;  
Full swith redy servis  
Fand thai thare a schowre,  
For first thai drank of the swete,  
And senin of the sowre.  
Than sir David the Bruse  
Makes his mone,  
The faire coroun of Scotland  
Haves he forgone ;  
He loked furth into France  
Help had he none  
Of sir Philip the Valais  
Ne zit of sir John.

The pride of Sir David  
Bigon fast to slaken,  
For he wakkind the were  
That held him self waken :  
For Philip the Valaise  
Had he brede baken,  
And in the toure of Londen  
His ines er taken :  
To be both in a place  
Thaire fourard thai nomen,  
Bot Philip payled thare,  
And David es cumen.

Sir David the Bruse  
On this manere  
Said unto sir Philip  
Al thir sawes thus sere ;  
Philip the valais,  
Thou made me be here,  
This es noght the forward  
We made are to-zere ;  
Fals es thi fourard,  
And evyll mot thou fare,  
For thou and sir John thi son  
Haves kast me in care.

The Scottes, with thaire falshede,  
Thus went thai about  
For to win Ingland  
Whils Edward was out ;  
For Cuthbert of Dorem  
Haved thai no dout,  
Tharfore at Nevel-cros  
Lan gan thai lout,  
Thare louted thai lan,  
And leved allane.  
Thus was David the Bruse  
Into the tour tane.

Having given this "window catalogue" and portraiture of English Poetry ; of those, who, though rude and unseemly, were yet necessary as the foundation work of the noble structure raised upon them, we now come to the time of Chaucer, the first great Poet of the English tongue, and to the interesting period of European literature, which in his day and generation was presented to the world.

Our next number will take up the life and times of this eminent man, whom Edmund Spenser in his *Fairy Queen* has described as

"On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed."